

EPA Environmental Education Grant Status Report

Grant Title: **Masonville Cove Environmental Education Programming**

Assistance #	<u>NE 96366001</u>
Report:	<u>Status Report</u>
Report Date	<u>4/30/20</u>
Budget/Project Period Dates	<u>1/1/20 – 3/31/20</u>
Grantee's Project Officer's Name	<u>Kathy Kirkland</u>
Grantee's Project Officer's Telephone #	<u>(215) 814-5176</u>

Federal Funding:	<u>\$ 60,000.00</u>
Federal Funds Expended:	<u>\$ 24,192.86</u>
Federal Funds Remaining:	<u>\$ 35,807.14</u>

GOALS/OBJECTIVES:

This project includes implementation/expansion of two key elements of the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Campus' (MCEEC) existing environmental education plan. Project goals are: 1) an advanced expansion of the School Leadership in Urban Runoff Reduction Project (SLURRP) in two Baltimore City Title I high schools, including in-school outreach, environmental-focused service learning, and helping students meet Maryland's Environmental Literacy standards, and 2) Community Engagement events and programs that involve residents of all ages in environmental literacy activities and hands-on stewardship. Program objectives are to increase participants' environmental knowledge of storm water runoff (causes, sources, and how to prevent it), provide an awareness of land use and local environmental issues, inspire behavioral change, reduce litter, and promote/increase environmental stewardship in the community.

PLANNED VS ACTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACHIEVED ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS (MUST INCLUDE OUTPUTS AND OUTCOMES):

School-based Programming

The grant program was designed to serve approximately 120 (9th-12th grade) students at two Title I Baltimore City high schools: Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove and New Era Academy. The program is actually serving 180 students from these schools: three Biology classes from New Era Academy (approximately 120 students) and two Biology classes from Ben Franklin HS (approximately 60 students).

The program is an advanced expansion of the well-established School Leadership in Urban Runoff Reduction Project (SLURRP). Using the same concepts as the elementary program, MCEEC educators tailor the program to high school level by focusing on vocabulary and scientific methodology that are relevant to the Maryland High School Science Assessment.

The following is a summary of the programs conducted during this reporting period:

Date	School	Lesson/Stations
1/21/2020	New Era Academy	Future Enviro-Engineers
2/18/2020	Benjamin Franklin HS	What is a Watershed?
3/10/2020	Benjamin Franklin HS	Water Quality

Classroom programming with New Era Academy was concluded in January, and classroom outreaches with Benjamin Franklin HS (BFHS) began in February. At the end of the first outreach, BFHS teachers were given materials they would need to implement the Wiki-Watershed and community trash clean-up activities. During the teacher-led community clean up activity, students from BFHS collected more than 60 lbs. of trash and recycling.

During this reporting period, sub-award selection was finalized with three partner organizations. These organizations were assessed through an application process to ensure that they will address the EPA's required education and environmental priorities and the program's goals of increasing environmental literacy among community members. Essays describing project goals and objectives were evaluated, and agreements for the sub-awards were finalized in January. Below is a summary of the proposed subaward projects:

- **Baltimore Community ToolBank:** This local community non-profit will hire an Outreach Coordinator to provide meaningful, direct education to a diversity of local student and business audiences pertaining to sustainable practices in a hyper-urban setting, with a specific focus on stormwater management. Using their existing rain gardens and gray water containment system as anchors, the Outreach Coordinator will engage education groups from K - college in a range of environmental lessons including: the importance of re-purposing runoff in an urban setting; the value of native plants, pollinators and habitat creation; the harm of unmitigated storm water runoff; and the benefits humans reap from a healthy, sustainable city/neighborhood. In addition to serving education audiences, the position will engage local business groups to discuss opportunities for owners to install similar features to scale in a variety of settings.
- **ClearShark H2O:** This local non-profit will provide a series of oyster-based environmental education programs to Masonville-area schools. In addition, they will support four days of community outreach at the Masonville Cove Environmental Education Center to engage Masonville area residents in environmental stewardship.
- **National Aquarium:** They will collaborate with the Curtis Bay Recreation Center and engage their summer camp students in an eight-week environmental education series at both their Center and the Masonville Cove site. Potential activities include nature walks at Masonville Cove utilizing Biodiversity toolkit backpacks and the iNaturalist app, maintenance of the Curtis Bay Recreation Center native garden, a fishing program, birdwatching, stormdrain stenciling, and nature-based mindfulness activities (i.e. nature journaling/drawing, activating nature play space.)

Community Engagement

During this reporting period, MCEEC offered many free programs for community members. The following is a summary of the community programs during this period:

Date	Program	# Adults	# Kids	Total
1/4	Scientific Monitoring	2	1	3
1/10	Nature Walk	2	2	4
1/11	Nature Walk	3	0	3
1/25	Nature for Kids	2	1	3
2/1	Scientific Monitoring	3	0	3
2/8	Baltimore Bird Walk	17	0	17
2/21	Nature Walk	0	4	4
2/22	Nature Walk	2	0	2
2/22	Nature for Kids	2	3	5
3/5	Oyster Program	4	16	20
3/7	Scientific Monitoring	1	1	2
3/13	Nature Walk - CANCELLED DUE TO COVID 19			
3/14	Nature Walk - CANCELLED DUE TO COVID 19			
3/21	Nature for Kids - CANCELLED DUE TO COVID 19			
3/28	Oyster Program - CANCELLED DUE TO COVID 19			
TOTALS		38	28	66

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROJECT PLAN UPDATE: N/A

HIGHLIGHTS:

A highlight of community programs during this period was a Baltimore Bird Walk on February 8, which brought 17 birders from the local Audubon chapter to Masonville Cove. They were especially interested in the pair of nesting eagles that have returned for the second year. MCEEC staff are closely monitoring the nest for signs of eggs. Another well-attended program was an Oyster Program on March 3, conducted in partnership with oyster expert Bryan Gomes from ClearShark H2O. The program, which served 16 kids and 4 adults, featured an oyster-tonging game, oyster examinations and stories, and knot tying activities.

POLLUTION PREVENTION ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

School outreach programs on watershed dynamics helped students begin to understand runoff pollution and how to prevent it. During the teacher-led community clean up activity, students from BFHS collected more than 60 lbs. of trash and recycling.

EQUIPMENT: N/A

AREAS OF CONCERN - DEFICIENCIES/CORRECTIVE ACTION:

The Covid19 pandemic has produced some challenges that are affecting this grant project. Maryland State Department of Education closed all schools on March 13. At this time, the closure remains in effect through May 15, though it seems likely that the closures may extend further into the school year. Although the current situation is challenging for everyone, we are committed to providing support to our partner schools and community.

At this time, we have completed most of our grant outcomes but would like to support the continuity of learning for the students we are currently serving through the end of this school year. In order to support the established distance learning program in Baltimore City Public Schools, we are changing the one remaining classroom outreach and field trips planned for this spring to distance learning activities. We have been in touch with our partner teachers at the two local high schools and they have already begun incorporating our activities into their digital lessons. We have provided directions and supply boxes for hands-on activities, instructional videos, and innovative online activities that will engage students and allow us to fulfil our few remaining grant goals. For example, students will participate in a virtual scientific monitoring activity, and do analysis using water quality data from the Department of Natural Resources “Eyes on the Bay” program, which monitors the water at the Masonville Cove pier.

Because the MCEEC is closed to the public and there will be no visitation under the state-wide “stay at home” order, the staff has begun implementation of several creative strategies to engage the community and to continue to promote environmental stewardship. The Friends of Masonville Cove Facebook page now regularly features two weekly postings that can be used by teachers, students, or the general community. On “Masonville Mondays”, the site has a video or instructions for an environmentally focused at-home activity. On “Green Tip Tuesday”, the posting includes ideas for small things everyone can do that will make a big difference for the environment and our communities. Numbers of people reached and engaged through the Facebook page will be tracked. An additional, bi-weekly version of the MCEEC newsletter is now being produced. This contains links to the Facebook activities, as well as additional content on mindfulness, at-home activities, and interesting articles.

Additionally, the MCEEC team is producing and distributing 1,000 “STEAM To-Go Boxes” to the local community. These boxes contain materials and directions for 5 hands-on, environmentally themed learning activities for students and are being distributed at City Schools’ food distribution centers. Boxes contain one activity for each of the STEAM disciplines (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math). Living Classrooms Foundation will be producing more of these “STEAM To-Go Boxes” through the end of the school year and discussions are underway with BCPSS for the possibility of wide distribution to schools all across the City.

We have also begun discussions with our subaward partners about alternate plans for their deliverables, if the “stay at home” order or other required social distancing measures prevent their activities to proceed as planned. A request for a no-cost extension has been submitted to give sub-awardees additional time to complete their projects.

RENEGOTIATED COMMITMENTS: N/A

SUGGESTIONS FOR EPA SUPPORT:

On 4/15/20 and 4/28/20, emails requesting approval of certain amendments to the program were sent to Kathleen Kirkland. Specifically, we requested approval for changing the remaining classroom outreach and field trips planned for this spring to distance learning activities and shifting our community-based activities to a digital medium. We also requested a no-cost extension on the end date of our award to 12/31/20. This would give our sub-award partners more time to complete their efforts, which were also adversely affected by the Maryland school closures and state-wide “shelter in place” order this spring. It would be helpful to receive some communication regarding these requests.

RESOLUTION PLAN AND TIMING: N/A

ACTION ITEMS: N/A

TARGET COMPLETION DATE: N/A